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Safety Talk and Tips

Eastern Region's Environmental Safety and Health Newsletter

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June is National Safety Month

This year's theme:

Safety where we live, work, and play.

Source: National Safety Council

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Safe Driving is Everyone's Responsibility

The Fiscal Year is eight months old and, so far, the region's number one type of accident occurrence has been automobile accidents. Already this fiscal year, there have been 8 reports of accidents involving automobiles. This represents more than half of the total reports!

The accidents involving Eastern Region vehicles had many different causes. Three of the accidents involved parking or backing up in which the vehicle hit a stationary object; one was caused by the employee pulling out on a blind corner; another hitting a vulture; another occurred while stopped at a light and another car sliding into it; another the employee passed out; and the last was a tire blow out. Although some of the accidents were not the employees' fault, some of the accidents could have been prevented.

Supervisors and employees need to increase driving safety awareness. There are steps that can be taken to help reduce the chances of accidents. Although there have been no serious injuries from automobile accidents to date, automobiles are the number one cause of work related deaths.

Recommendations:

Defensive Driving Classes - Although the NWS cannot allow time off or pay for this type of instruction, MICs/HICs are encouraged to see if offering this training in the office could be beneficial to employees. For example, in New York State, people taking this training get ten percent off of their insurance premiums. Insurance companies offer this discount in other states, while some states do not offer this discount.



Defensive driving is driving to prevent accidents IN SPITE of other unskilled drivers or drivers who ignore traffic regulations; as well as unpredictable pedestrians; bad weather; and equipment failures.

ANTICIPATE problems as far ahead as possible and watch out for the other guy.

THE STATS

Over 6 million traffic accidents per year.

About 2.9 million injured every year.

About 40,000 fatalities per year.

Over 17,000 killed in alcohol / drug related accidents (over 40% of all traffic fatalities)

Most common accident is rear end collision (over 2.5 million per year)

Source: NHTSA

Typically, the course is given by AAA or insurance companies for a minimal charge. In New York, the course lasts 6 hours. MICs/HICs should make calls to AAA to see if this training is available in their states and if the 10 percent discount is available. Since most organizations that provide the training require a minimum number of people, offices should also allow spouses or other family members to participate. Benefits include employees saving a considerable amount of insurance charges, and the agency having employees with a better awareness of driving skills.

Video Training – Eastern Region has purchased 3 sets of defensive driving videos which will be routed around to all ER field offices within the next 6 months. The videos are entitled “Distracted Drivers” and “Road Rage”.

Internet Training – Several web links are available that can help in discussions to lead staff meetings. Remember that each staff meeting should include a topic on safety. Each of the following web sites offer detailed safety tips that can be discussed quickly at a staff meeting:

TOP FIFTEEN DRIVER DISTRACTIONS

1. Rubbernecking
2. Driver fatigue
3. Looking at scenery
4. Passenger (child)
5. Adjusting radio/CD
6. Cell phone
7. Eyes not on the road
8. Not paying attention
9. Eating or drinking
10. Adjusting vehicle controls
11. Weather Conditions
12. Unknown
13. Insect or animal
14. Map, book, or directions
15. Medical or emotional impairment

Source: Virginia DMV



<http://www.safedrivingtest.com/contributing.html>
http://www.sos.state.il.us/publications/rr/rr_chap10.html
<http://www.drvoitureur.com/drsafely.html>



Tips to ARRIVE ALIVE....

- Avoid distractions.
- Don't drive when you are overtired,
- Check the road ahead: always leave yourself an out. Don't follow too close, stay back and get the big picture.
- Always wear your seatbelt.
- Drive defensively: Watch out for the other guy.
- Slow down: adjust to changing weather and road conditions.
- Use your headlights to make yourself more visible to others.
- Maintain average traffic speed. Radically different speed (too fast or slow) can be very dangerous.

How to tell if you're too sleepy to drive...

1. Been awake for 20 hours or more?
2. Less than 6 hours sleep last 24 hours?
3. Drive often between midnight and 6am?
4. Find yourself drifting out of your lane?
5. Missing road signs?
6. Trouble keeping eyes focused?
7. Daydreaming or wandering thoughts?
8. Feel irritable and impatient?
9. Suffer from sleep apnea?

Tips to help you stay awake.....

1. Rest is the only real cure
2. Take frequent breaks from driving which include a short nap
3. Consume caffeine equivalent to 2 cups coffee (but it's no substitute for sleep)

What to do if you are in an accident in a GOV

1. If there are injuries, seek medical help immediately
2. Notify local authorities. Appropriate police must investigate all GOV accidents
3. Notify your supervisor as soon as possible. Supervisor must notify NOAA within 24 hours (8 hours if serious).
4. Form SF-91, Operator's Report of Motor Vehicle Accident
5. Form SF-94, Statement of Witness (if appropriate)
6. Form CD-137, Report of Accident/Illness within 6 working days (copy to ERH)
7. If injured, Supervisor must complete Form CD-16, Authorization for Medical treatment (for attending physician)
8. Injured employees complete Form CA-1, Federal Employee's Notice of Traumatic Injury and Request for Continuation of Pay

Lock-out / Tag-out... What is it and why is it so important to everyone?

"Lockout/tagout" refers to specific practices and procedures to safeguard employees from the unexpected energization or startup of machinery and equipment, or the release of hazardous energy during service or maintenance activities.

Approximately 3 million workers service equipment and face the greatest risk of injury if lockout/tagout is not properly implemented. Compliance with the OSHA Standard 29CFR (1910.147) prevents an estimated 120 fatalities and 50,000 injuries each year. Workers injured on the job from exposure to hazardous energy lose an average of 24 workdays for recuperation. In a study conducted by the United Auto Workers (UAW), 20% of the fatalities (83 of 414) that occurred among their members between 1973 and 1995 were attributed to inadequate hazardous energy control procedures, specifically, lockout/tagout procedures.

So far this fiscal year, two incidents where lockout/tagout was not performed properly have occurred in Eastern Region. This is two too many. There aren't many second chances if lockout/tagout is not performed correctly and the results of improper lockout/tagout can be catastrophic.

Recommendations

Offices are encouraged to develop, implement, and practice the safest lockout/tagout program possible. After auto accidents, failure to abide by lockout/tagout procedures results in the second highest cause of serious injuries in the work place. As per the National Weather Service Manual 50-1115, Occupational Safety and Health Manual, dated October 3, 2003, Procedure 4 -Control of Hazardous Energy Sources, the Station Manager:

- (1) Shall have oversight over the implementation of this procedure, and ensure that the requirements of this procedure are followed by individuals at the NWS facility.
- (2) Shall ensure that procedures are developed at NWS field offices for equipment that require lockout/tagout.
- (3) Shall ensure NWS employees follow the requirements of this procedure when performing lockout/tagout procedures.

The ERH Systems Operations Division, in coordination with the ER ES&H Advisory Board, will be clarifying and developing guidance for the awareness, training, retraining, and certification of our employees relative to Lockout/Tagout.

Web Resources:

<http://www.osha.gov/SLTC/controlhazardousenergy/index.html>

https://www.ops1.nws.noaa.gov/Secure/SAFETY/Safety_manual.htm

<http://www.osha.gov/SLTC/controlhazardousenergy/otherresources.html>

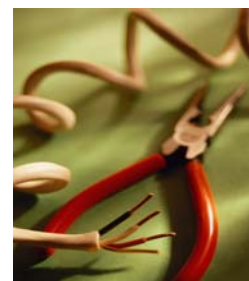
<http://www.calstatela.edu/univ/hrm/ehs/training/handouts.htm>

<http://siri.uvm.edu/ppt/powerpt.html>

<http://www.osha-slc.gov/dcsp/ote/resource-center/loan.html>

<http://www.osha.gov/SLTC/index.html>

Lock-out / Tag-out could save the life of someone who works right there in your office. Every person in every office must know AND follow established procedures. It is a matter of life and death.



Real life lesson from the field

The importance of Lock-out / tag-out, including the important step of using an electrical tester to verify that power has been disconnected, was plainly demonstrated during recent re-construction in Eastern Region.

An electrical contractor was moving a 277 volt light fixture. Convinced he had shut off the appropriate breaker, the contractor commenced his work of disassembling the fixture. Insulated/isolated from a ground path by his use of a fiberglass ladder, the electrician was unaware that the wires he was working on were, in fact, live. When the contractor's forearm contacted the dropped ceiling grid, a grounding path was completed and he received an electrical shock which burned his arm. As he pushed himself away from the open circuit, he fell around 4 feet to the floor and also injured his back.

Lock-out / tag-out of an electrical breaker, including verification that power is not evident at the outlet, is critical to ensure that no power is flowing through the wires before commencing maintenance activities.

About this Newsletter

This newsletter is brought to you on a quarterly basis by the Eastern Region Environmental Safety and Health Advisory Board to help increase awareness of the importance of the safety and health programs within the Department of Commerce, NOAA, and the National Weather Service. Your comments are welcome.

